

## Why Romans Could Change My Life, Part 1 - Romans 1:1-4 – January 2nd, 2011

- Today, we not only begin a new month and a new year, but we begin a new study through a new book, which is the book of Romans.
- By way of introduction to what is arguably the most important letter of all the Epistles in the New Testament, I want to address the why.
- What I meant by that is this; it is vital we know why it is that the book of Romans was written, and why this book needs to be studied.

- The reason why Romans needs to be both studied and taught, is the same reason why the Holy Spirit had Paul write it in the first place.
- Simply put; "It's because of the profound impact this book has had on the lives of millions of people over the last two thousand years."
- Many a saint of old came to a saving knowledge of Jesus Christ because of this Epistle, and countless more will be saved yet future.

Martin Luther, of the Book of Romans, said; "It is the chief part of the New Testament and the perfect gospel . . . the absolute epitome of the gospel."

G. Campbell Morgan said that it was; "The most pessimistic page of literature upon which your eyes ever rested . . . the most optimistic poem to which your ears ever listened."

- Charles Spurgeon said: "The Epistle of Romans is one of the greatest of Paul's writings, and is rather a treatise than a letter."
- Another said: "When any one understands this Epistle, he has a passage opened to him to the understanding of the whole of scripture."

- With that introduction, I would like to invite you to turn to the Book of Romans 1:1-4 as we open up and get into this important Epistle.

- This is part one of a teaching titled; "Why Romans Could Change my Life." In it, we sort of break the ice of our study through this book.

### 1. It's from somebody not just anybody (Verse 1)

(1) Paul, a servant of Christ Jesus, called to be an apostle and set apart for the gospel of God—

- v1 Paul identifies himself as the one writing the letter, and addresses himself as a servant of Jesus Christ, and an apostle of the gospel.
- The reason he identifies himself at the beginning is because it's a scroll as opposed to pages which enables them to see who it's from.
- Also, notice that first, he's a servant, then second, he's an apostle sent out, and set apart for a purpose, namely, the Gospel of God.

- It's important to understand that this word for servant in the original language of the New Testament has the meaning of a "bond slave."
- Sadly, we sanitized and softened the word slave by translating it as the word servant, and in so doing, the meaning packs little punch.
- The fact of the matter is that to be a slave meant you had no rights of your own, because you were not your own, but were owned.
- A bond slave would become a slave of their own volition, and they would be a slave for life, because of their love for their master.

Exodus 21:2-6 NIV "If you buy a Hebrew servant, he is to serve you for six years. But in the seventh year, he shall go free, without paying anything. (3) If he comes alone, he is to go free alone; but if he has a wife when he comes, she is to go with him. (4) If his master gives him a wife and she bears him sons or daughters, the woman and her children shall belong to her master, and only the man shall go free. (5) "But if the servant declares, 'I love my master and my wife and children and do not want to go free,' (6) then his master must take him before the judges. He shall take him to the door or the doorpost and pierce his ear with an awl. Then he will be his servant for life.

- So, first Paul identifies himself as a slave, then introduces himself as being called to be an apostle, set apart for the Gospel of God.
- In other words, first and foremost as a bond-slave, he's both set apart to, and sent out for the Gospel of God, meaning the good news.
- Now, here's the question; "why does Paul introduce himself first as a bond-slave, before he identifies himself as being an apostle?"

- I would suggest that it's because Paul knew the source of greatness came from being a bond-slave, and not from being an apostle.
- Let me take it a step further; one must first become a bond-slave of his own volition before he can be sent out for the great commission.
- This epistle is from a man who was a Pharisee before coming to Christ, and now is sent out as a bond-slave reaching others for Christ.

- Before God can set us apart, and send us out to further the Gospel, we must first, because of our love for Him, become a slave for life.
- It's for this reason that Paul, in what becomes his longest introduction of all his letters, goes to such great lengths to communicate this.
- It's as if he's saying, I am a bond-slave, somebody who's been called to be sent out and set apart, to reach everybody with the Gospel.

### 2. It's good news not just good advice (Verse 2)

(2) the gospel he promised beforehand through his prophets in the Holy Scriptures

- v2 Paul defines and describes the gospel as one that God promised and foretold through the prophets of old in the Holy Scriptures.
- The reason that Paul deems it necessary to qualify the Gospel of God is because it's a term meaning; "Good news, your free now!"
- Not only was it good news instead of good advice, it was that which had been prophesied about, and the good news is, it's here now.

Jon Courson in his commentary said it this way; "The Greek word translated "gospel" is ...[where] we get our word 'evangelist.' In the Septuagint, this was the word used when the people of Israel were released from their Babylonian captivity. It meant, 'You can go home. You're free. Good news!' Truly, the gospel is Good News—not just good advice. A lot of preachers, authors, and speakers try to make Christianity a bunch of good advice. Most best-selling Christian books today are full of good advice about child-rearing, financial planning, or marriage counseling. ...Paul wasn't separated unto the good advice of Christian living. He was separated to the Good News of God."

### 3. It's a Person not just a principle (Verses 3-4)

(3) regarding his Son, who as to his human nature was a descendant of David, (4) and who through the Spirit of holiness was declared with power to be the Son of God by his resurrection from the dead: Jesus Christ our Lord.

- v3 Paul then tells them that this promised Gospel was about God's Son, who as it related to his human nature was David's descendant.
- v4 He says, Jesus Christ our Lord, through the Spirit of holiness was declared to be the son of God by his resurrection from the dead.
- This is brilliant in that the Holy Spirit is giving the Apostle Paul the perfect words to introduce the person of Jesus Christ, the son of God.

- The reason he writes this, this way is because 25 years ago on that road to Damascus Paul met a Person, not a principle or principle.
- As one so aptly worded it; "Paul had an encounter, not with a theological principle or a philosophical ideal, but with the risen Lord."
- The "Person" of Jesus Christ was fully man, as a descendant of David, in his birth, and fully God in the resurrection after His death.

"As to His flesh, He was of the seed of David, but His higher nature was by His resurrection manifested most powerfully to be divine. Had He not risen He could not have been God; His resurrection by His own power has made His Godhead plain."

Charles Spurgeon

- This is why what's written in this book has the power to change lives, as what's written in this book is about the person of Jesus Christ.
- As one commentator wrote; "[This] ... impacts individual lives. It isn't interesting theory or philosophy, it's life-changing good news.